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UNCLAS YEREVAN 002648

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR EUR/CACEN
DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISP/EURASIA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MARR PREL PARM PGOV I2 AM

SUBJECT: IRAQ DEPLOYMENT GETS CONSTITUTIONAL COURT OK

REF: Yerevan 2018

Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

SUMMARY

¶11. (SBU) Armenia's Constitutional Court ruled December 8 that the agreement signed between Poland and Armenia regarding the dispatch of Armenian non-combat troops to Iraq does not run counter to the Armenian Constitution. The court's decision paves the way for a parliamentary hearing and vote on the issue. Sources indicate that the National Assembly will include the issue during planned extraordinary sessions in mid-December or in early January. End summary.

CONSTITUTIONAL COURT RULES IN FAVOR OF DEPLOYMENT

¶12. (SBU) Armenia's Constitutional Court ruled December 8 that the agreement signed between Poland and Armenia regarding the dispatch of Armenian non-combat troops to Iraq does not run counter to the Armenian Constitution. Under the September 6 memorandum of understanding, Armenia committed to send a contingent of 50 military doctors, demining specialists and drivers. Defense Minister Serzh Sargsyan represented the GOAM during the court hearings and said that the Armenian military personnel would take part in humanitarian and defensive activities only. Speaking in front of the panel of nine judges, Sargsyan strongly defended the GOAM's decision to deploy troops and argued that Armenia should not stay isolated from regional developments such as those taking place in Iraq.

MID-DECEMBER OR EARLY JANUARY DEBATE DATES LIKELY

¶13. (SBU) The court ruling paved the way for parliamentary hearings on the issue. Despite optimistic announcements by GOAM ministers regarding eventual deployment, the outcome of parliamentary debates still remains unclear. Some MPs, including opposition figures, have raised doubts about the decision, citing concerns about the security of the estimated 25-30 thousand Iraqi-Armenians (reftel). Although the current National Assembly session has technically ended, the legislature will likely convene two extraordinary sessions on other issues in mid-December and could, under its by-laws, include the deployment issue for discussion. Sources at the National Assembly told us they expected the GOAM to submit the issue of Iraq deployment for parliamentary debate before the end of year. Ministry of Defense sources, however, said they expected a slightly different timetable that would put parliamentary discussion and voting in the early part of January 2005.

¶14. (U) Minimize considered - Baghdad.

EVANS